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ABSTRACT

When educators refer to "reciprocity" in Reading Recovery, most often they are referring to the connections that can be made across reading and writing through teaching and learning actions--each reading or writing act has the potential for providing a context for learning about the other (Clay, 1998), and in this way, influencing each other. Another way that educators depend on shared influences, implicit within teaching and learning interactions, is the "reciprocity" that occurs between teacher and child. To understand what reciprocity is and its role in aiding the emergent reader/writer in literacy learning, this article examines two areas: (1) the role of observation and language; and (2) growth in cognition and maturation of perception (knowing where to look, what to look at, and what to look for). The article states that the task for every child is to figure out how language works, how it is structured, how one thing is related to another through language, and how to use language as a tool--a child learns this across many different settings by engaging in "inquiry." The article explores a conversation between one of the author/educators and her student as they begin the writing portion of a lesson to see how these constructs apply. It also describes a different student and her introduction to a new book. The article finds that through frequent opportunities to read and write a variety of texts, learning to see and use new features of print within the reading and writing process, and engaging in rich conversations about text, the child constructs knowledge about literacy. (Contains 2 figures and 17 references.) (NKA)

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Teaching for Reciprocity: Developing a Self-Extending System through Reading and Writing.

by Susan King Fullerton and Diane E. DeFord

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J. F. Russell

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Teaching for Reciprocity: Developing a Self-extending System through Reading *and* Writing

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One of the most critical concepts we seek to understand in Reading Recovery is what Marie Clay means when she talks about reciprocity between reading and writing. One meaning of *reciprocity* is, "mutual dependence, action, or influence" (Merriam-Webster). When we refer to *reciprocity* in Reading Recovery, most often we are referring to the connections that can be made across reading and writing through teaching and learning actions. Each reading or writing act has the potential for providing a context for learning about the other (Clay, 1998), and, in this way, influencing each other.

Another way that we depend on shared influences, implicit within teaching and learning interactions, is the ***reciprocity*** that occurs between teacher and child. We believe that our observations of the child inform our teaching. Each day as a child reads and writes we gather evidence of how their knowledge of print is changing and whether our teaching is effective. If, in fact, we have developed a true teaching-learning situation, the relationship is ***reciprocal*** — shared, felt or shown by both sides. In other words, we learn as the child learns and vice versa. This reciprocal relationship between teacher and child occurs primarily through language interactions.

The purpose of this article is to explore how reciprocity propels children's learning about reading and writing, and how Reading Recovery teachers guide developing readers and writers through language interactions, dynamic decision-making and acts of teaching. Within this article, we will discuss Clay's theory of reciprocity and the power of conversations in scaffolding reciprocity within writing activities and through book introductions.

Reciprocity within Clay's Theory

To understand what reciprocity is and its role in aiding the emergent reader/writer in literacy learning, we will examine two areas: 1) the role of observation and language; and, 2) growth in cognition and maturation of perception (knowing *where* to look, what to look *at* and what to look *for*).

The role of observation and language

Language is one of the most powerful tools we possess. Each day within our lessons, opportunities abound for the child to learn language, to learn through language, and to learn about language

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(Halliday, 1974). This learning occurs as the teacher and child interact. In Reading Recovery we refer to these interactions as ***conversations*** with the context primarily being literacy events. It is within these language interactions that the teacher initially serves as a model, which, in turn, sets the stage for further language use and language learning. The child, as an astute observer, watches closely and tries out these new behaviors with the support of a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1986). In this way, children are cognitively apprenticed (Rogoff, 1990) into using language in a variety of contexts. At times, the talk is more instructive — we use prompts to guide the children toward more independent literacy behaviors. Another type of talk is the conversation around wondering, or inquiry, where together, the teacher and child are constructing understandings and making meaning.

How does the language of teaching and learning (Cazden, 1988) mediate literacy development? While a full answer to a question such as this is beyond the scope of this article, we think it is important to consider mediation in relation to the two ways in which we have already discussed reciprocity. The first way that the language of teaching and learning mediates literacy development is through the shared learning that occurs as the teacher supports and extends the child's learning with language. The second mediation occurs as the child reads and writes while the teacher supports learning more about written language.

Because language is both social (between people) and intrapersonal (within each individual), ". . . language assists children in exploring, and gaining control over, their world" (Dyson, 1983, p.2). Also, learners attend to what they have knowledge of (Clay, 1998). Therefore, as Reading Recovery teachers, we function as "the noticer" by promoting opportunities that support the child in linking what is known to what is new. We are also "the reminder" so that while the child is working at orchestrating or consolidating new information into a framework of action, we support the use of what is known as he or she reads and writes. The teacher, then, shares attention so that the child can learn to look at print and notice more about print when the child's knowledge about print is yet primitive.

When we are specifically teaching to build reciprocity, then, we want to demonstrate to the child that the item of knowledge she has learned from reading and from writing can be used in both contexts. So we support children as they learn that the bits of information they pick up from reading can help them in writing. Then we work in the other direction, so the information they pick up from writing helps them in reading. In other words, we "*dig ditches*." This analogy suggests that the pool of knowledge developed from reading and the pool of knowledge developed from writing must merge (DeFord, 1994) into one source of knowledge. So, when we notice an instance that has this potential to build reciprocity, we talk about it. When we see an opportunity the child might have missed, we "remind" her to use what she knows to help herself. We also take every opportunity to help her to use and to link new information to what she knows. When we do this, we are building reciprocity.

Growth in cognition and maturation of perception

What is the relationship between cognition and perception? Gibson (1991) states that, ". . . perception is cognition" (p. 493). She provides her favorite dictionary definition of cognition to support her point: Cognition is the act or process of knowing; perception. "Many psychologists think of cognition exclusively as problem solving, reasoning, remembering, and so on, however, I like to point out that these processes begin with and depend on knowledge that is obtained through perception" (p. 493). This is particularly the case when a child is learning to look at, think about and act with print!

In considering writing, in particular, we find the knowledge gained through writing aids the child's perception during reading. Clay (1991; 1993; 1998) contends that learning to write letters, words and sentences enables the child to visually discriminate the details of print that will be used in reading. DeFord's research (1994) illustrates how successful teachers actively align text in both reading and writing, creating opportunities for students to orchestrate links between the two. Simply, if the child knows a word to use as an, ". . . island of certainty" (Clay, 1991, p. 172) in reading, the successful teacher helps the child create another island of certainty in writing. What the child attends to in reading *the* might be different from what she attends to in writing *the*. So, by making reference to *the* in both reading and writing, the teacher is helping the child align text and build reciprocity.

While at first it might seem that we are arguing that building reciprocity is as simple as getting the child to write and read the same core of words, the human mind does not work in quite this linear a fashion. Clay (1998) cautions us that a child may enter into learning about print at any point, using any item, and relate this information to a whole host of different world and language experiences. She uses Rumelhart's (1994) interactive processing model as the best example for thinking about reciprocity. In his model, information sources a reader uses within the reading process have to be dynamic and interwoven.

Rumelhart expands on the notion raised earlier by Gibson when he suggests that the distinction between perception and cognition is somewhat fuzzy. He states that,

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> . . . reading is at once a 'perceptual' and a 'cognitive' process. It is a process that bridges and blurs these two traditional distinctions. Moreover, a skilled reader must be able to make use of sensory, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic information to accomplish his task. These various sources of information appear to interact in many complex ways during the process of reading (Rumelhart, 1994, p. 864).

Clay (1998) uses this interactive model to make the point that, ". . . any interactive processing can start from anywhere (in the top-down, bottom-up hierarchy) and proceed in either direction" (p. 143). Detailed descriptions of beginning readers and writers indicate that a teacher cannot force a sequence of skills or a sequence in learning hierarchical relationships or abstract ideas (Clay, 1993).

This is somewhat baffling to the teacher. In looking at the mature reader, it may seem the child is processing meaning, structure and visual information, for example, in quite a parallel fashion. But the novice reader may begin learning about reading with ". . . somewhat deliberate attention shifting, and somewhat separated work across different sources of knowledge (or kinds of information)" (Clay, 1998, p. 143). Consequently, as Reading Recovery teachers, we seek to help children attend to many different sources of information while they read and write, and provide materials that are not highly sequenced in the kinds of information (like phonics) included within the text. This seemingly idiosyncratic processing will evolve into the more mature, parallel processing system of the skilled reader. In skilled reading, the reader samples almost simultaneously from among semantic, syntactic, lexical, letter-cluster, letter and feature-level knowledge sources within a well orchestrated reading process (Rumelhart, 1994; Clay, 1998).

How does this happen? Again, language is the tool. The language of books, and the language children create as writers, is very rich and complex. Yet, there are aspects of these texts that are redundant, supportive and repetitive. What Clay (1998) refers to as the frequency principle is very helpful to the beginning reader and writer. "The frequency principle operates at all levels in all languages: some units — letters, letter sequences, words, spelling patterns, sentence patterns and writing forms — occur more frequently than others at every level of the written language hierarchy" (p. 154).

Haber (1978) asks a very interesting question: "Are redundancies in the text, or in the reader?" (p. 51). We argue that reciprocity begins to form when the redundancies noticed within text become internalized, so the reader/writer can be active in availing themselves of this internal knowledge as they read or write. This internalization of knowledge about the redundancies develops through repeated encounters with a variety of texts as a reader and a writer. "Repeated opportunities facilitate learning in speaking, reading, and writing over both items and processes" (Clay, 1998, p. 154). This is why we work to capture the surprises we see in children's learning and work to foster children's growing control over written language as a weaver might capture a new color into a complex tapestry. We can trust that language will provide more opportunities for the child to strengthen and extend these new threads into a strong weave.

Conversations within writing and book introductions: Scaffolding reciprocity

The task, then, for every child is to figure out how language works, how it is structured, how one thing is related to another through language, and how to use language as a tool. In essence, a child learns this across many different settings by engaging in ***inquiry***. Inquiry (Lindfors, 1999) is not a solitary act — it is something we do as part of being human: to connect, to be part of a community, to understand and to reveal oneself. "Because we inquire *of others* in order to further our understanding, inquiry is as much a social act as it is an intellectual one" (p. 2). Lindfors talks about ***acts of language*** as having to do something by ***means of language***. Thus, reading and writing are each acts of language, and are bound by some basic rules that govern language: 1) communication purpose (intention), 2) expression (of purpose, of content, of stance), 3) participants and 4) context. How do purpose, expression, participants and context function in Reading Recovery lessons?

For example, each book we use has its own communication purpose (to tell a story or to inform related to a plot or a theme). A book has a unique way of expressing or showing its stance, purpose or content. It might be expressed as a tale or as a piece of realistic fiction. It may use an embedded story structure, as in the story of the Three Little Pigs, or it may have a refrain. Each book has its own unique participants who have personalities, motivations, feelings and actions. Each book has a context or setting and is set in time (past, present or future). Every story that gets written by children has these same obligatory aspects of language. We observe how children are growing in their ability to control the language of books as they read and write. Since language is a vehicle by which children communicate about what they do and think, teachers use these interactions as a window onto children's inquiry.

> It is only when we know our children well and listen closely to their use of language that we can get inside the child's frame of reference and support the child's next forward moves. We must spend time talking *with* children, not *at* them. We must arrange our program so that particular adults know particular children well, including the ways in which they use language (Clay, 1998, p. 10).

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Let's examine one conversation that occurred between Susan and one of her students as they begin the writing portion of a lesson to see how these constructs apply. (Adriana is learning to use English, and this plays into some of the decisions Susan makes.)

(Conversation before writing)

T: Adriana, Ali [the child's sister] told me you have a great idea for the invention convention. You are working on it together. [Pause] Tell me about that.

C: We are making a fruit juice.

T: Wow! You are inventing a fruit juice! That's interesting! Let's write about *that*.

C: I am inventing a fruit juice.

T: Just you?

C: No, my sisters and me.

[Teacher looks at child and provides a long wait time.]

C: My sisters and me are inventing a fruit juice.

The purpose is only incidentally writing. By drawing Adriana into a conversation that involves certain participants (Adriana and her sisters) and context (the invention convention), both the purpose and the expression of this purpose, the content and the stance become the responsibility of the writer to provide. Susan's first move was to say, "Ali told me you have a great idea for the invention convention…that you are working on it together." Adriana responds to Susan's request to tell her more about that: "We are making a fruit juice." As Susan moves into the phrase, "Let's write about that," she allows Adriana to think for a moment to say, "I am inventing a fruit juice." Adriana's first attempt to bring these different aspects of language into a coherent sentence framework is tossed back to her for further consideration. Susan tries to extend her sentence by referring back to the original conversational move that included Adriana's sister Ali as part of the context (as one of the participants). Finally, Adriana settles on, "My sisters and me are inventing a fruit juice." This utterance includes communication purpose, expression, participants and context (although these are telescoped in this brief, unelaborated sentence). This message was further elaborated during the next two days (see Figure 1).

If we reflect for a moment on the decisions that Susan and Adriana made, the exchange of language within the writing helps us see how Adriana is learning language through writing. Because Adriana is learning English, her natural quietness was not facilitating the writing and reading portions of her lesson. Consequently, Susan found she had to go to the playground, observe her in the classroom, talk with family members and get to know who Adriana was beyond the child she was in Reading Recovery lessons. Susan had to connect, develop a shared culture and help Adriana reveal herself before Adriana could begin to know more about this world of printed English. As Clay suggests, Susan had to get inside the child's frame of reference as a way to guide her inquiry.

Susan allowed this new language user (at least, a new user of English) to have wait time in which to gather her thoughts, but she also was a "noticer" and "reminder" in order to support

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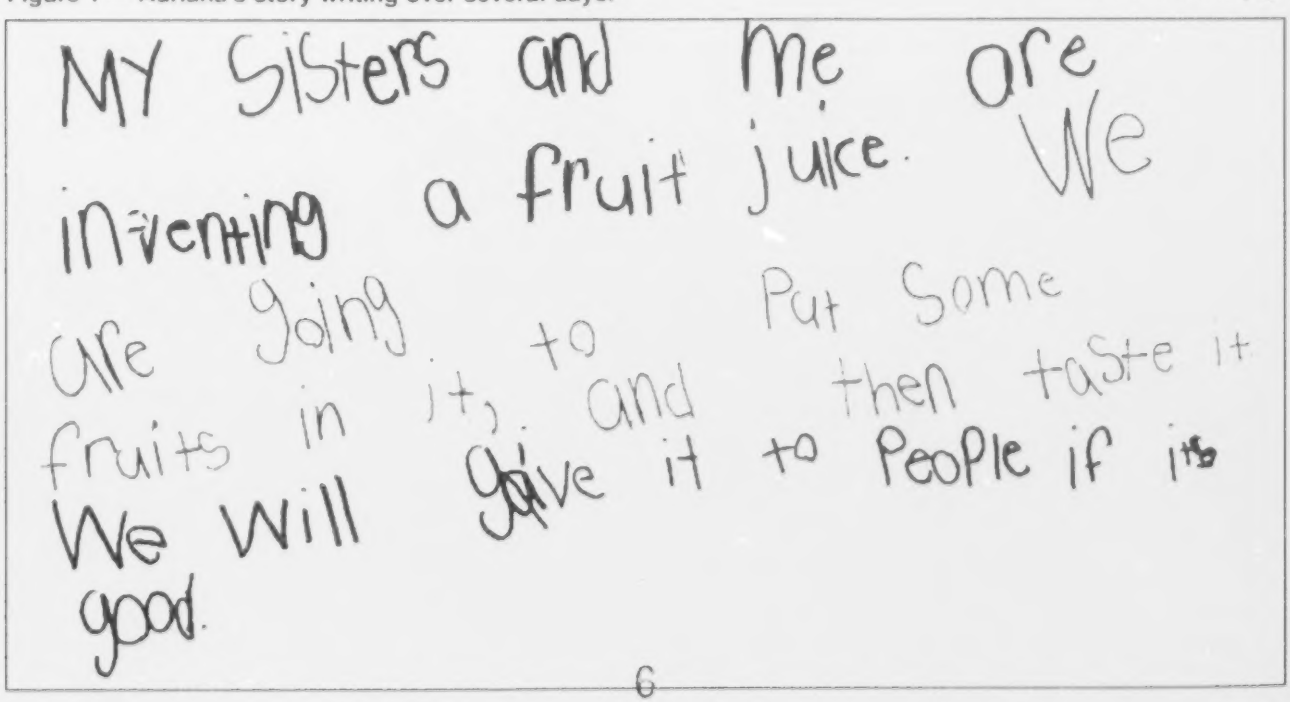
Figure 1 — Adriana's story writing over several days.


MY Sisters and Me are
inventing a fruit juice. We
are going to Put Some
fruits in it, and then taste it
We will Give it to People if its
good.

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Adriana as she composed her message in this new language. As Clay (1991) states:

> . . . The child who does not like to talk with the teacher or who has some difficulty in understanding what the teacher is saying may be a child at risk.
>
> Be strong minded about talking with a child with whom it is difficult to hold a conversation. The human reaction is not to spend much time talking to such children. The educator's reaction should be to create more opportunities for talking (p. 73).

The key in this instance was for Susan to find out more about Adriana so it was easier to find these golden opportunities for joint conversation. "Talking with children is very much like playing ball with them. It is a collaborative exercise, and if you do not allow your partner to be part of the collaborative exercise, he or she will leave you, physically, or attentionally. Reciprocity is the key to success" (Clay, 1998, p. 16-17). In making the conversation purposeful, providing a useful context, and helping the child express the content and information about the participants within their message, the teacher maintains the authenticity of natural language.

As a language user, Adriana also made some decisions as she wrote. Her first decisions were about composing a message that extended across three lessons. What do I want to write today? How does what I want to say today relate to what I said yesterday? Adriana corrected her work on the practice page (*want* for *went*) (see Figure 2) and in her story (*ine...inventing; gave* for *give*). She thought about some different ways words could be spelled and asked, "Is it O-R or E-R?" (in *sister*). When she came to *if* she stopped writing and asked for help. She thought it might start with *e* but wasn't sure. When she came to *juice*, she asked if it was *c* or *s*. Language had clearly become a tool for Adriana, even the English language. She could compose, relate one thing to another, consider possible alternatives in spelling and ask someone for support when necessary. Writing and reading helped her learn these lessons.

Let's turn to some considerations for thinking about conversations crafted within the new book orientation and first reading, and how these conversations might better provide support for reciprocal gains between reading and writing.

The introduction to the new book provides the teacher with an opportunity to familiarize the child with the information they will need to access as they read. We are guided to consider key concepts, pictures, new words and language structures of the text (Clay, 1993). Much of the conversation that occurs during the new book orientation has the purpose of facilitating the child's responding during the reading process. This can, ". . .be explained in terms like recency and familiarity"

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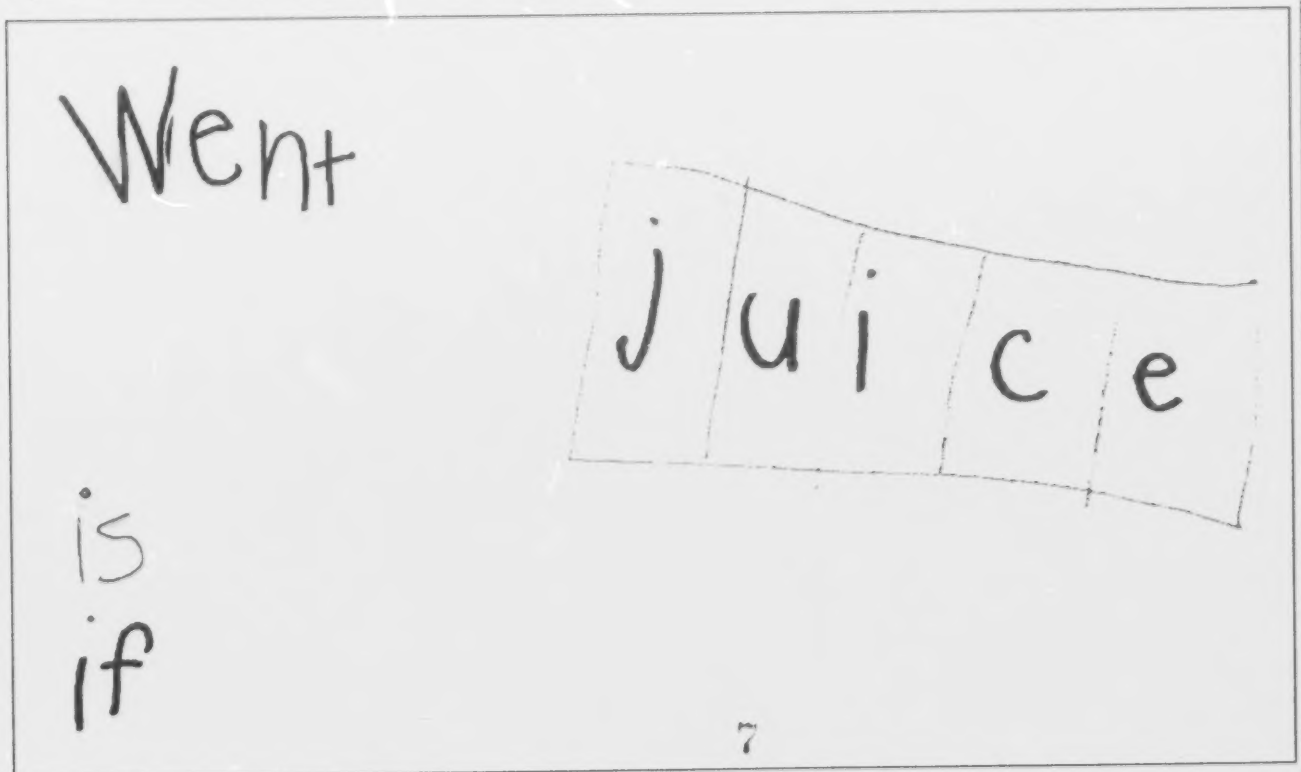
Figure 2 — Adriana's practice page for one day.



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(Clay, 1993, p. 37). This conversation is authentic, meaningful, and helps the child to relate to the new book by calling upon familiar events and concepts. It is also short enough to be held in memory by the child. In other words, this conversation provides the child with the *gist* of the purpose (plot and theme), content, participants (characters), context of the story, as well as, ". . . the ideas and the language he needs to produce when prompted by print cues" (Clay, 1993, p. 37). In considering how to make the book available to the child and the processing to use as she reads, the teacher has to balance many different layers of information.

The book itself is one such layer. The teacher considers, ". . . the different levels at which language is organized: discourse, plot and dramatic effect, propositions, sequence of events, repeated components, climax or surprise, semantics, syntax, words, orthographic features, layout, and print features" (Clay, 1998, p. 174-175). Within the orientation to this new book, teachers have to ". . . ready the mind and ear to grapple with novelty" (p. 175).

Another layer of information relates to the child at a particular point in his program. The story, ". . . must be well within the child's control, uses words and letters he knows, or can get to using his present strategies" (Clay, 1993, p. 36). Our goal is to set the child up for success in the first reading, and this calls for the child to orient, adjust or align himself to the particular circumstances of the new book.

In considering aspects of the text and characteristics of the reader, ". . . the teacher anticipates what might trip the children as they read the story; yet *the overview of the story is like a conversational exchange, and the attention to detail should not dismember the flow of the story*" (Clay, 1998, p. 175).

The task for the teacher is to emphasize the meaning of the whole story and the structure of the text as a framework within which the child can utilize what she knows about print and language during reading:

> . . . With a whole view of the uninterrupted story, children have a feel for the progression of the story through to its climax, so the story itself provides a support within which the detailed processing of information in the text occurs.
>
> Understanding the structure of the whole story provides a kind of scaffold that allows children to focus attention on many new details about print (Clay, 1998, p. 175).

In the following example, Susan is working with Tia. To provide a little background, here is a brief description of the lesson, up to the new book, to highlight some of the links Susan built upon across the lesson and through the new book.

As they walked to their Reading Recovery room, Susan engaged in a conversation. It happened that Tia's mother was working in the library that day. So when Susan and Tia began to talk prior to writing, Susan made a link back to this previous conversation. As they talked about what Tia's mother was doing as she worked in the library, Tia generated the sentence, *She is helping the kids read.*

During the writing, Susan referred back to the running record book, Baby Hippo (Randell, 1996), as Tia used the familiar word *he* to generate *she*. So while Tia was writing, Susan made a link back to a reading example to help her notice more about print. Susan also noticed when Tia checked on herself (and reminded her when she didn't!) both in reading and writing. For example, in reading Susan asked, "Did that make sense?" when Tia produced, *Mother bear is getting for a walk*. She followed this up with,"You

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have to stop if what you read doesn't make sense." Since *go* was a word that Tia knew how to write, Susan guided her in using this to help herself in reading. In writing, Susan stressed checking on herself again when Tia said, "Around up and down," as she wrote the *d*, and caught herself when her words and her actions did not match. Susan commented, "You noticed it, didn't you? You checked on yourself! We're going to get the hang of that *d*, aren't we?" When Tia was assembling the cut-up sentence, she made, *She is help the kids read*, and she was confused about what to do with the left over piece. As a writer, Tia had easily dealt with *ing* as a chunk of written information. As a reader, she was still learning how to attend to the details of print. With Susan's guidance, Tia was being stretched to see more in print and check in both reading and writing.

For the new book, Susan chose Along Comes Jake (Cowley, 1987). Coincidentally, this text uses the word *helps* as part of the pattern, which was a happy surprise for Susan. Again, the frequency principle supports this child's learning! The new book introduction began in this way:

> **T:** The story we're going to read today is a fun story. Do you ever help around your house?
>
> **C:** Yes.
>
> **T:** You do? What kinds of things do you do?
>
> **C:** Do the stairs.
>
> **T:** You clean the stairs? What else?
>
> **C:** Dishes.
>
> **T:** Oh! Do your sisters help do that, too?
>
> **C:** My sister doesn't...my big one, she doesn't live with us.
>
> **T:** How about your little sister...does she help?
>
> **C:** She tries.
>
> **T:** She probably makes a mess, doesn't she? Well, you know what? In this story, almost the same kind of thing happens. In this story, there are two kids. Their names are Ben and Anne. There's Ben and there's Anne. So in this story, these two kids and the family help do all sorts of things around the house. But the little brother, Jake, causes big problems. Probably just like your little sister! So let's see what the problems are that Jake causes. This story is called Along Comes Jake.

As Tia and Susan examine the book, Susan helps Tia locate the words *helps* and *with*. She helps her say, *And then along comes Jake* and to use it as a refrain. Susan points out the different ways Anne and Ben and Mom and Dad help each other ("Anne helps with the bed ...with the garden...with the dirty clothes. Anne helps Mom in the bathroom. Dad helps Mom with the wood," etc.). She emphasizes how everyone is working so hard, how they help each other, and how much of a mess Jake makes all the time.

In this level six book, these concepts are important to understanding the purpose of the story and the actions of the participants. Knowing the language structure that accompanies these concepts serves to scaffold Tia's use of meaning and print as she orchestrates all of these cues in her reading. Consequently, when Tia read *Anne* for *Ben* she was able to correct this error. She also said, "And along..." and was able to self correct again and say, "And then along comes Jake." Susan also reminds Tia to use her finger to help her eye when she reads several pages with a different structure that causes one-to-one matching to get off ("Dad is helping Ben with the car," and "Dad is helping Ben with the laundry"). Susan's prompt, "Is that right?" and the reminder to use her finger supports Tia to self correct and work out the difference between her prediction of *laundry* for *washing*. Later, when Tia shifts back into the structure, "Dad is helping," she notices for herself that she is not right and corrects immediately.

As Tia reads this new book, she grapples independently with the names for the different characters, as this is part of the changing pattern that is a challenge in this book. The support that Susan provided in the introduction for the repeated language structure, *And then along comes Jake*, as well as *_____ helps ____ with the _____*, led Tia to be able to use this information to check against the sense she was making, the structures she might prefer in her spoken language, and the print that was unique to her.

If we revisit the notion of redundancy at this point, it may help us understand how our use of language, selection of materials and teaching points work together across the lesson to build reciprocity. We quoted Clay (1998) earlier as saying, ". . . some units — letters, letter sequences, words, spelling patterns, sentence patterns and writing forms — occur more frequently than others at every level of the written language hierarchy" (p. 154). This linguistic fact describes the redundancy we can expect to operate in and across different kinds of text. However, the fact that there is natural redundancy in language also gives each of us as teachers something to trust in as we work with children. We do not have to artificially select books with only certain words in them, or artificially ask children to write sentences that have certain words in them to support their learning about the reciprocity between reading and writing. ***We are teaching for principles and strategies in and across lessons, not teaching words.***

Language has redundancy within it. We can trust, as in the above example with Tia, that certain language will naturally occur with higher frequency, thus helping children learn. It was not necessary for Susan to get *helps* into Tia's sentence that day so that she could read the new book. It is only in the child's earliest lessons (because she knows so few items) that we have to be more deliberate about making sure the items of information the child knows

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are included in reading and writing experiences. As we argued above, as the redundancies in written language become internalized, so that the child comes to expect certain things to happen (because there is a greater probability that certain things do occur), we do not have to teach in an artificial way for reciprocity. When we teach for strategies and principles, this concept will become very apparent to the child (as we notice and remind!).

In essence, selecting the new book and crafting the new book orientation are probably the most difficult things we do as teachers within Reading Recovery lessons. Like the tale of The Three Bears, the porridge or *story*, in this instance, can't be too hot, can't be too cold; it has to be ***just right***. While the child integrates new and familiar information within each book reading, our role is critical. We have to maintain a certain ***ease*** for the child in this first reading. We have to increase accessibility of the text for the child (anticipating novel features, taking care of new words, and dealing with book and language structure), and we have to introduce and prompt the child to work with new knowledge (Clay, 1998). Here, again, we share the demands for attention during this first reading by serving as ***the noticer*** and ***the reminder*** within the reading process. We seek to support the child by calling on useful analogies, recalling similarities from other books and experiences, suggesting words the child knows to use in problem solving, and guiding the child's attention to develop and benefit from reciprocal information.

Conclusion

Clay (1998) argues that reading and writing share common sources of information, and that the reader and writer will actively construct a network of analogies to connect these sources of information across repeated opportunities to engage with text. She emphasizes three concepts that are critical to keep in mind as we actively support and teach for reciprocity. They are: 1) Children construct their literacy knowledge; 2) The literacy system is self-extending; and, 3) Frequency of occurrence is a factor.

In our discussion of reciprocity, we have tried to show how the teacher weighs information about the learner in terms of what the learner brings to lessons and what opportunities may arise for new things to be learned. From our perspective, building reciprocity in teaching and learning, and within acts of reading and writing, depends on the teacher's sensitivity to language and skill in observation. It also depends on the teacher's ability to weave the fruits of her observations and understandings into and across lessons. By noticing new things and reminding the child to use what they know in problem solving, Reading Recovery teachers teach for reciprocal gains. "Before long, a kind of reciprocal learning takes over. As children learn to use more skills and strategies, they become able to talk about them; as they talk about them, they are more likely to use them and move on to more complex skills and strategies" (Clay, 1998, p. 72).

Through frequent opportunities to read and write a variety of texts, learning to see and use new features of print within the reading and writing process, and engaging in rich conversations about text, the child constructs knowledge about literacy. This learning will continue through a lifetime of reading and writing; it is the essence of what a self-extending system is about.

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